



Weekly Safety Meeting

Falls From Heights

Falls are among the most common causes of serious work-related injuries and deaths. Employers must take measures in their workplaces to prevent employees from falling off overhead platforms, elevated workstations, or into holes in the floor and walls.

Falls are the second leading cause of occupational fatalities and disabling injuries in the United States. Each year over 500 workers die in fall-related accidents and over 300,000 workers suffer a disabling injury. Most of these fatalities and disabling injuries, according to the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), are the result of falls from elevations of six feet or less.

Where a fall hazard exists, there are two acceptable options: one, eliminate the hazard, or two, provide protection against it. Ideally, it is best to totally eliminate the hazard.

Fall protection is defined as any means or system used to protect employees from falling from an elevated walking/working surface. Fall protection involves the elimination, prevention, and control of fall hazards.

Whenever feasible, employers should always set up a temporary floor, guardrails, toe boards, or other physical barriers to falls instead of having workers rely on nets or tying off for fall protection. When not feasible, personal fall protection or safety nets must be used. No work should proceed unless the necessary fall protection is in place. The use of fall protection can prevent serious injury or save your life.

Fall Protection Equipment is Broadly Divided into Two Categories

Fall protection equipment is divided into two categories.

The first category is fall prevention equipment. Guardrails and coverings at floor openings and safety-interlock gates on elevated platforms are designed to prevent falls. A body harness worn by the worker can also be used to tether him/her to an area away from the fall hazards.

The second category is fall arrest equipment, which is designed to save the worker if he/she falls. He/she may wear personal protective equipment consisting of a body harness and lanyard attached to a lifeline or an anchor point. Another option is to have a net slung below the work area to protect the worker.

Fall Restraint:

Fall Restraint includes such items as a guardrail or parapet wall. It can also consist of a personal fall restraint system, which keeps you from reaching an unprotected "fall" point. Guardrails (on scaffolds,

aerial lifts, and on the perimeter of buildings) are considered to be a type of fall protection classified as fall restraint.

Fall Arrest:

Fall Arrest STOPS you if you're falling. If you are at risk for falling (General Industry 4' and Construction 6') you must use appropriate fall protection equipment. One type of appropriate fall protection equipment is the personal fall arrest system. The entire personal fall arrest system must be capable of withstanding the tremendous impact forces involved in a fall. A person without protection free falls 4 feet in ½ second and 16 feet in 1 second!

A personal fall arrest system includes a full body harness, a shock absorbing lanyard or a rope grab and vertical lifeline, and a sound anchorage able to support a load of 5000 pounds.

DO

- Pick anchorage points that support 5000 lbs./worker (support a pickup truck);
- Fall arrest systems should be rigged so employees can't free fall more than 6 feet (or contact any lower level);
- Tie off above your head. When a six foot person ties off at the feet, a free-fall could be as much as 12 feet;
- Place anchorage directly above/behind your work area to avoid potential swing fall hazards;
- Use the shortest lanyard possible. The shorter the tie-off, the shorter the fall; and
- Have anchorage points selected by a competent person and personal fall protection with the American National Standard Institute (ANSI) approval. Make sure the equipment is in good condition.

DON'T

- Do not tie off to vent pipes or a non-structured, non-designated area;
- Do not tie a knot in lanyards. This will reduce its strength;
- Do not use water pipes, electrical conduits, light fixtures, or guardrails as anchor points;
- Do not use any lanyards without self-locking snap hooks;
- Do not join multiple lanyards together to reach an anchorage;
- Do not allow more than one worker to tie-off to the same anchorage unless it is designed and approved by the manufacturer or engineer;
- Do not unhook from fall protection while exposed to a fall greater than 6 feet;
- Do not allow someone to rig your equipment unless you verify that it has been done correctly; and
- Do not use an anchorage that is not independent of any anchorage used to support or suspend platforms.

CHANCE TAKERS...ARE ACCIDENT MAKERS!!

